

# HERITAGE FREESTATE

FREE STATE PROVINCIAL HERITAGE RESOURCES AUTHORITY

## THE NOMINATED SITES FOR DECLARATION IN THE FREESTATE PROVINCE

### PART 2

(2014/2015)

#### 1. THE NAMOHA BATTLE SITE IN WITSIESHOEK (QWAQWA)

##### **Introduction**

In terms of the National Heritage Resources Act, (Act No. 25 of 1999), a provincial heritage resources authority (herewith referred to as the Free State Provincial Heritage Resources Authority) is responsible for the identification and management of Grade II heritage resources and heritage resources which are deemed to be a provincial competence in terms of this Act. According to the NHRA, (Act No. 25 of 1999): *“Those heritage resources of South Africa which are of cultural significance or other special value for the present community and for future generations must be considered part of the national/provincial estate and fall within the sphere of operations of heritage resources authorities*

##### **Purpose**

To inform and recommend to the Free State Provincial Heritage Resources Authority (FSPHRA) the importance of declaring the *Namoha* Battle site as a Grade II site in terms of the stipulations of the NHRA (Act No. 25 of 1999).

##### **Locality of the site**

*Namoha* is an area in the former rural Qwaqwa homeland in the Free State Province. The area is between Monontsa and Poelong villages. It came into being in the early 1940s. This piece of land was handed to a sub-chief, Moreneng Mopeli, after being ordered to move from a place called Boiketlo, a very fertile land on top of the mountains above Monontsha village, when Boiketlo area was declared a grazing camp.

## **Contextual backdrop**

After the Basotho War of 1866, Chief Paulus Mopeli, a half-brother of King Moshoeshoe, negotiated with the President of the Orange Free State, President Brand, for an independent peace treaty for his people. Witsieshoek (later Qwaqwa) was allocated to him where the former residents, the Makhlokoe, under Chief Oetsi (Witsie) had been removed. An agreement, popularly known as the *Traktaat*, dated 1 June 1867, was entered into with Chief Paulus Mopeli and the Basotho moved into the area.

From 1907 the Additional Native Commissioner was stationed in Witsieshoek, and the Reserve as such fell within the magisterial district of Harrismith. In 1936 the Union Government passed the Native Trust and Land Act. This Act made provision for the establishment of the Native Trust to buy up land in the so-called released areas to be occupied and farmed by Africans under stringent supervision by the Trust officials. As the population and livestock increased, more and more land was needed for cultivation. Overstocking and overgrazing became acute in the reserves and drastic steps were needed to halt the rapid deterioration of the land. The government, in response to the need for more land and to make the reserves economically viable, introduced measures which were aimed at improving conditions in the reserves.

In terms of the betterment policy, measures were to enforce stock reduction, curtail overgrazing, consolidate arable land and provide soil conservation measures. The implementation of these measures, however, resulted in a sense of deprivation and powerlessness among the people who were affected by them.

## **Background and historical significance of the Namoha site**

Between 1942 and 1950 certain inhabitants of the Witsieshoek reserve launched an organized revolt against decisions and instructions emanating from the office of the Assistant Native Commissioner regarding the improvement and control of stock, and the rehabilitation and development of land in the reserve. They organized petitions designed to force the government to suspend or rescind especially the harsh measures of *Proclamation 31/1939* which the Reserve Board, in the name of the people, had unwittingly agreed to.

As the number of the Basotho in Witsieshoek increased and new measures introduced, the number of villages also increased. Each village was given a name accordingly and each was under a sub-chief. *Namoha* was one of such villages. The battle which later became known as the *Namoha Battle* came as a result of the betterment scheme introduced by the apartheid government. To the Africans, this meant limitation to livestock. Initially the culling of cattle was accepted as early as 1941, long before the advent of the apartheid government in South Africa. During this period, most Africans thought that that was just a once off event. In the 1950, rejecting the issue of limiting livestock, some people in Witsieshoek refused to sell off their culled cattle. However, this refusal led to many confrontations with the authorities who wanted to enforce that.

Mopelinyane became the leader of the protesting group which became known as *Lingangele* (meaning those who stand firm/instigators/dissidents/agitators or the resisters). Therefore, he

was regarded by the authorities as a dangerous person who should be removed from Witsieshoek. *Lingangele* were assisted by the Witsieshoek Vigilance Association (WVA) on its quest to resist the culling of cattle. When the government did nothing to address the concerns of this group and of the Basotho in general, the *Lingangele* embarked upon defiance of the government orders. They wanted to force the government to accede to their demands. As a result of their stance against cattle culling, more and more people began supporting the *Lingangele*. The *Lingangele* leaders began to assume a heroic status among many members of the community. It was popularly felt that the stock culling had involved deception by the officials, that rather aiming to improve the reserve's stock by eliminating the weakest, the main intention was to reduce overall numbers. This, it was charged, was not what the Basotho had accepted in 1939. Notwithstanding the authorities' attitude towards Mopelinyane, his selfless attitude appealed to the masses. He gradually came to be regarded as a hero who had successfully flouted the authorities. Consequently, the number of his adherents grew overnight and his followers moved through the Reserve with pride. What really triggered resistance against the government was its intention to demarcate areas into camps. In the camped areas only certain types of livestock could graze in specific camps. These were the newly acquired Afrikaner and Swiss bulls. The Basotho cows were not allowed to graze in those camps unless they were 'given' to the bulls for mating.

The White traders and the Dutch Reformed Church received larger farms and their land was not subjected to the Trust regulations. The government, instead of providing more land to the Basotho to accommodate the increasing population as well as land for grazing, decreed that livestock should be reduced because the cattle were far too many for the area. The carrying capacity of the Reserve was limited to 12 500 stock in 1940, thus culling of livestock was to be carried out as part of the betterment measures. Accordingly, all stock owners had to produce all stock belonging to them at times and places fixed by the Native Commissioner. The owner who failed to comply with the requirements of such a notice was guilty of an offence. However, this issue caused so much friction between the government and the Basotho that it culminated in bloodshed.

On 20 February 1950 a meeting was convened by the Magistrate of Harrismith, JJ Snyman to persuade the Basotho to cooperate for voluntary culling of cattle. Few Basotho attended that meeting whereby they denounced the issue of cattle-culling. On 12 October 1950 a Commission of Enquiry was appointed to investigate the plight of the Basotho. However, members of *Lingangele* declared no trust to the Commission. The fact that the Commission was composed of White people further fuelled suspicion and frustration. Despite the opposition to the Commission by the *Lingangeles* at Witsieshoek from 1 November 1950 to 5 December 1950 and also from 15 January 1951 to 26 January 1951, the Commission continued with its work. However, at its first meeting only Chief Charles Mopeli and about 70 of his followers attended, despite the fact that it was well advertised all over the area in a notice dated 6 October 1950.

On 27 November 1950, contrary to the Proclamation which prohibited gatherings of more than five people and the carrying of weapons, the *Lingangele* called a meeting at *Namoha* village. On the same day the four *Lingangele* leaders, Mopelinyane, Scotland Kolo, Paulus Mphetheng

and Letsie Mopeli, were to give evidence before the Commission of Enquiry. Many people attended and the gathering was said to have been peaceful, although they carried traditional weapons.

Due to this, they were served with subpoenas. They were given to Major LPS Terblanche (District Commandant of Police from Bethlehem) and his contingent to serve them. He went to *Namoha* with 66 armed policemen. On arrival at the gathering the police wanted to see the four men and ordered the crowd to disperse but the Basotho refused. A certain constable Ntsane Mopeli, who acted as an interpreter, entered the crowd on instruction from Major Terblanche to look for the four men whom the Commission had subpoenaed. This action caused a stir among the Basotho who at that time had become aggressive. When Ntsane was within the crowd, there suddenly was a great movement, his horse was intentionally struck with a stick, it got frightened, jumped and he fell off. Immediately thereafter, the Major shouted 'fire' and the attack started.

After forty minutes of fighting, the police withdrew with their two dead and sixteen wounded. The sixteen policemen who were wounded included Major Terblanche. The two killed were Lieutenant Jonker and Constable Erasmus.

On that night following the battle, Paulus Mpheteng and others allegedly collected corpses and attended to the wounded as no medical assistance was provided until the next morning. Other dead and wounded were found in adjacent huts.

Some of the deceased, five of them were taken by their families for burial in their respective villages. The remaining bodies, nine in all, were buried at *Namoha* and the mass funeral service was conducted by a member of *Lingangele* Rev. N Lecheko (Minister of Religion at Mabilela Village). The deceased were buried along-side each other, but not all at the local cemetery.

Following the *Namoha* confrontation many people were arrested. The police used helicopters and armoured vehicles to search for the suspects. As the police continued with their raids, many Basotho ran away. On Wednesday 29 November 1950 when the government officials, journalists and photographers descended to the area to collect evidence and take some pictures, the Basotho in the nearby houses ran away. That was an indicative of the uneasiness which was created by the battle and an indication of confusion on the side of the Basotho.



## **Recommendations**

It is therefore against the above background information that it is recommended that the *Namoha* battle site be declared as one of the provincial heritage sites in the Free State.

## **2. THE WITSIE'S CAVE (LEKHALONG LA OETSI) IN WITSIESHOEK (QWAQWA)**

### **Purpose**

To inform and recommend to the Free State Provincial Heritage Resources Authority (FSPHRA) the importance of declaring the *Witsie's Cave* as a Grade II site in terms of the stipulations of the NHRA (Act No. 25 of 1999).

### **Locality of the site**

*Witsie's Cave* is situated in Monontsha Village (Qwaqwa).

### **The historical background to Witsieshoek**

In order to understand the historical significance of the *Witsie's Cave*, it is important to trace the historical background to the Witsieshoek territory. Witsieshoek was the name of the area tucked away in the northern slopes of the Drakensberg in the northern Free State. It nestles deeply in the corner bordered in the south-east by Natal and by Lesotho in the south-west. The original inhabitants of Qwaqwa were the San people. They were driven out of the area by one of King Moshoeshoe's I subordinates, Lephatoana Oetsi (Witsie) who, in turn, settles there around 1838.

The farmers reported Witsie to Major HD Warden; the British Resident in Bloemfontein, in charge of the administration of the *Republic van die Oranje Vrije Staat* (Republic of the Orange Free State) after it was annexed by the British in 1848. Major Warden ordered Witsie to retrieve the allegedly stolen cattle from his people. Complaints about the Makhlokoe's raiding and lifting kept flooding the office of Joseph Orpen, the *Volksraad* representative in Harrismith.

It was under the administration of the Native Commissioner, assisted by the Witsieshoek Native Reserve Board. After it came into power in 1948, the National Party (NP) vigorously pursued its policy of apartheid that led to the passing of Bantu Authorities Act in 1951, and provided for the establishment of the homeland system. Thus Qwaqwa became homeland for the Basotho under this Act and was granted self-government in 1974. It remained semi-autonomous until 1994 when it was re-incorporated into South Africa and became part of the Free State Province.

### **The historical and cultural significance of *Witsie's Cave***

In Qwaqwa, the Makhlokoe first settled at the foot of the mountain known today as Fika Patso before moving to settle at Mohlomong. Mohlomong was in the vicinity of where the government building and former Qwaqwa parliament is situated today. It was while residing in Mohlomong that Wetsi discovered a cave near Monontsha Village. The cave was first used as a cattle post during dry seasons and later as a hiding place when Makhlokoe were attacked by Boers and fled to the neighbouring Lesotho and Natal. Witsie's hideout was a horse shoe-shaped cavern about 107m long, 35m deep and approximately 121m high with boulders at the entrance. Access to the site became difficult for his attackers. The commandos, therefore, surrounded the area with the object of starving Witsie and his subjects.

*Witsie's Cave* has strong attachments to the Makhlokoe as it makes their existence in the Qwaqwa area. There are also claims that the pile of stones found at the entrance of the cave symbolizes that during the attack some people were trapped inside the cave and left to die. According to Ntlhabo, such suspicions emanates from the knowledge of similar atrocities that happened elsewhere in the country, for example, at the cave in Makapan. Witsie was also known as a traditional healer and rainmaker. There is logic on the idea that the cave might have been used in the past for such purposes, therefore, to a certain extent possesses some spiritual powers.

*Witsie's Cave* is an iconic site which can celebrate the achievements of the Makhlokoe. As mentioned before, oral tradition and some written records attest to the fact that Witsie was a distinguished traditional healer during Difaqane. The cave has been referred to as a 'fortress' or 'stronghold' of the Makhlokoe forefathers.

### **Recommendations**

This dossier shows that *Witsie's Cave* is not just a piece of land but a site of heritage significance and with cultural values. It has been described as a site to which oral tradition is attached because of the events that took place there. Section 3: Sub-section 2(b) of the NHRA states: "places to which oral traditions are attached or which are associated with living heritage

are of cultural significance for the present community and for the future generation, must be considered part of national estate”. It is therefore against the above background information that it is recommended that the *Witsie’s Cave* be declared as one of the provincial heritage sites in the Free State.



### **3. MANTSOPA’S CAVE AND SPRING AT MODDERPOORT (LADYBRAND)**

#### **Introduction**

In terms of the National Heritage Resources Act, (Act No. 25 of 1999), a provincial heritage resources authority (herewith referred to as the Free State Provincial Heritage Resources Authority) is responsible for the identification and management of Grade II heritage resources and heritage resources which are deemed to be a provincial competence in terms of this Act. According to the NHRA, (Act No. 25 of 1999): *“Those heritage resources of South Africa which are of cultural significance or other special value for the present community and for future generations must be considered part of the national/provincial estate and fall within the sphere of operations of heritage resources authorities”*.

#### **Purpose**

To inform and recommend to the Free State Provincial Heritage Resources Authority (FSPHRA) the importance of declaring the *Mantsopa’s Cave* and spring as a Grade II site in terms of the stipulations of the NHRA (Act No. 25 of 1999).

#### **Locality of the site**

*Mantsopa’s Cave* and spring is situated at Modderpoort (near Ladybrand). Modderpoort is an Anglican Mission Station located close to the Lesotho border, 14km outside the Eastern Free

State town of Ladybrand on the R26 towards Clocolan. The site is part of the Anglican Church Mission Station of Modderpoort and access to the site is governed by the Anglican Church.

### **Historical background to Anna Mantsopa Makhetha (Koena-li-fule)**

Mantsopa was born about 1795 most likely in some part of what is today the eastern Free State and possibly near Mekoatleng. However, there are allegations that she was born at the village Ha Ramakhetheng in Lesotho on the west side of Likotsi Mountain overlooking the Mohokare at its confluence with the Phuthiatsana River. At Ha Ramakhetheng there are some landmarks associated with her, for example, it is referred to as *Lelapa-la-bo-Mantsopa*. When she was born, Mantsopa was named *Koena-li-fule*. Perhaps the above is misleading and her name could have meant that the crocodiles will eventually succeed.

As she grew up, there was an old lady in the vicinity who had acquired the name Ntsopa because of her skill at making clay pots. Ntsopa was also known as a story-teller and singer of traditional songs. Mantsopa did not master the art of making pots, but became well known in the village for singing traditional songs and for telling stories. Most importantly she was remarkable in her power to hold people spellbound as she related what had appeared to her dreams.

### **The historical and cultural significance of Mantsopa's Cave and Spring**

- ***Contextual background***

In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century as the San presence was fading and before the arrival of the Anglican missionaries, Modderpoort was settled by the Bataung, a tribe of the Basotho, who named this piece of land, wedged between the Platberg and Viervoet mountains, *Lekhalong-la-bo-Tau* (the Pass of the Lions). The Bataung separated from the Bahurutse tribe around 1640, adopted the lion as their tribal totem, and migrated towards the Free State and Lesotho from the north-west. They mingled more than most tribes with others, intermarrying with the Barolong, Batlhaping and Lihoya tribes, as well as the Griqua, Korannas and Bushmen.

At some point after the 1865-1866 war fought with the Boer settlers in the Free State, *Lekhalong-la-bo-Tau* was ceded to the Free State government as victors of the battle. After the Peace of Sorghum (*Khotso-ea-Mabele*) in 1866, the 'Conquered Territory' as it came to be known, was surveyed and parcelled into farms. *Lekhalong-la-bo-Tau* was included in this exercise. Two of the farms, Modderpoort and Modderpoortspruit (collectively known as Modderpoort) were offered to a man called Green, as a reward for fighting against the Basotho, but he was not keen to embark on a farming enterprise. Instead they were purchased in 1867 by Bishop Edward Twells of the Anglican Diocese of Bloemfontein, for development of a mission station

Mantsopa was married to a guy known as Lekote Makhetha. Unfortunately, Lekote died before they could have children. Lekote's elder brother Selatile Makhetha took her as his sixth wife. Their first born child was Ntsopa. The second was Setsieledi, the third being Seisilane. When she crossed with her husband they settled at Lehlahjweng which was a place next to *Lekhalong-la-bo-Tau*.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Mantsopa, the Basotho prophet and a contemporary of King Moshoeshoe I arrived at Modderpoort. She was widespread renown for her accurate prediction of the outcome of battles fought by the Basotho against a range of enemies. At first she was a strong critic of the missionaries, but later eventually converted to Christianity, practicing a mix of traditional and new beliefs. Living the full duration of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Mantsopa died at Modderpoort at the estimated age of 111 and was buried in the small cemetery outside the sandstone church, somewhat unusually in the section reserved for whites, alongside the Anglican Brothers. Revered as one of the great ancestors of the Basotho, she inspired a pilgrimage movement, and to this day her followers travel from far and wide to visit her grave, in quest of her favourable intercession in their fate and fortune.

There was another cave opposite the spring which is believed could have been the original one where she settled and continued working and healing people there. It is believed that she occupied the cave situated next to the cemetery through the instructions of the Anglican priests. She did not heal people there, but made use of her cave situated opposite the spring. At this place, Mantsopa used to pray for people and heal them.

- *Ritual performances on the site*

At Modderpoort there are two sites strongly associated with Mantsopa legend and are usually included in pilgrimage visits for either ritual performances or prayers. One is a freshwater spring, reputedly pointed out to Mantsopa as a source of ‘sacred’ water by the ancestors. The second is the cave where Beckett and his team of Brothers set up lodgings, according to popular belief, the prophet too lived and prayed there

The above is an indication that the idea which strengthens the notion that Basotho communities are not exceptional as they, like other African societies, realize that rituals form part of their tradition and culture. Alongside every social activity among their communities there are ritual activities lined up to be performed. The fundamental belief is that rituals have a more basic social function in expressing, fixing and reinforcing the shared values and beliefs of a society. Thus, among Basotho groups and many other African communities, rituals are associated with supernatural powers. They are perceived to be man’s route of access to their ancestors.

### *Pilgrims at Mantsopa*

Mantsopa’s followers claim a ‘spiritual’ possession of Modderpoort, which exists in a realm quite separate from, and irrespective of physical land control or title deed. On arrival at the site they demand access to Mantsopa’s grave, cave and spring, a right they believe is divinely conferred and cannot be curbed by the Western concept of land ownership. It is estimated by Modderpoort management that 600-800 visits to the Mantsopa sites are made by pilgrims on a monthly basis, indicating that the numbers of Mantsopa followers are substantial. Pilgrimages can often be seen in progress on Friday afternoons or Saturday mornings, following a route that begins at the cave, continues to the grave and later to the spring. At each of these stations on the journey, candles are lit and offerings such as written appeals, food and items like snuff boxes and lottery tickets are left behind in quest of the prophet’s blessings.

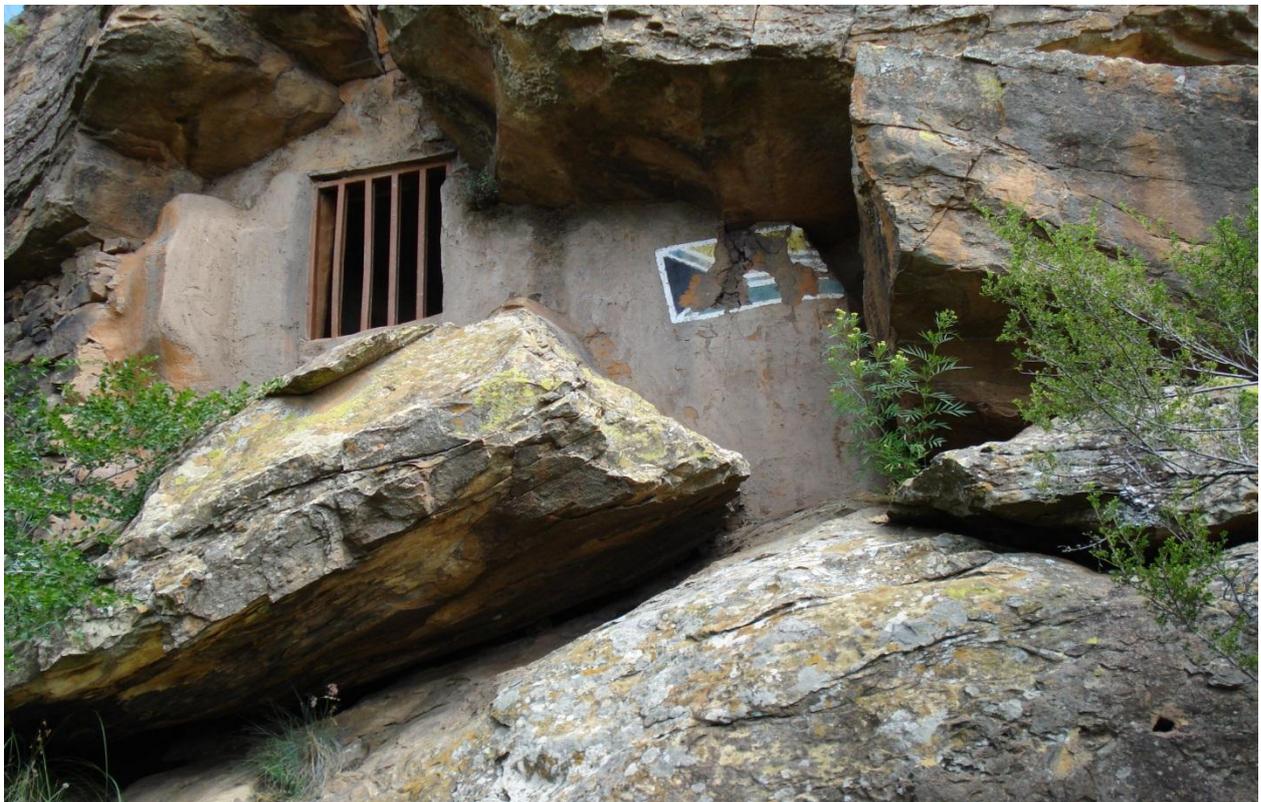
## **The status of the site**

In the church cave, some of the walls have religious texts inscribed on them and ledges and alcoves are used for placing candles brought by worshippers at the church and lit during their prayer sessions. The candles combine with the natural light that enters from the top of the cave to create some more light in the cave. Higher up, on the cliffs overlooking Modderpoort, are San paintings, evidence of religious beliefs that preceded those held by the visitors to the cave chapel.

## **Recommendations**

This dossier shows that *Mantsopa's* Cave and Spring is not just a piece of land but a site of heritage significance and with cultural values. It has been described as a site to which oral tradition is attached because of the events that took place there. Section 3: Sub-section 2(b) of the NHRA states: “places to which oral traditions are attached or which are associated with living heritage are of cultural significance for the present community and for the future generation, must be considered part of national estate”.

It is therefore against the above background information that it is recommended that the *Mantsopa's* Cave and spring be declared as one of the provincial heritage sites in the Free State. Although there are some reservations about linking Mantsopa with the issue of residing in the cave, its association with her makes it relevant for protection and preservation.



## **4. PROPHET WALTER MATITTA'S SPRING IN PHUTHADITJHABA (QWAQWA)**

### **Introduction**

In terms of the National Heritage Resources Act, (Act No. 25 of 1999), a provincial heritage resources authority (herewith referred to as the Free State Provincial Heritage Resources Authority) is responsible for the identification and management of Grade II heritage resources and heritage resources which are deemed to be a provincial competence in terms of this Act. According to the NHRA, (Act No. 25 of 1999): *“Those heritage resources of South Africa which are of cultural significance or other special value for the present community and for future generations must be considered part of the national/provincial estate and fall within the sphere of operations of heritage resources authorities”*.

### **Purpose**

To inform and recommend to the Free State Provincial Heritage Resources Authority (FSPHRA) the importance of declaring the Walter Matitta's spring as a Grade II site in terms of the stipulations of the NHRA (Act No. 25 of 1999).

### **Locality of the site**

Walter Matitta's spring is situated in Phuthaditjhaba (Qwaqwa).

### **Historical background to Walter Matitta and his prophetic life**

It is important to note that religious work from the Africans was in one way or the other without the mediation of missionaries and extremely important. Individual African people took the initiative in promoting African prayers and religious services. Membership of such groups transcended ethnic and language barriers. Walter Matitta was said to be the founder of a religious movement that became known as the Moshoeshoe Berea Bible Readers Church (Kereke ea Moshoeshoe). He was born in 1885. His parents had been allocated a site in the village of Ha Motsoene, Bothania area in Berea District in Lesotho. According to GM Haliburton, Berea was inhabited by Ngwane and Hlubi groups who settled in this area during the Lifaqane. Matitta's people were the Hlubi. His grandfather was a Zizi called Maxama. He had many sons, one of whom married Makoanyane's daughter who after her marriage was called Nothaweni. In the family there were six children Matitta being the fifth. The others were Sekota, Mosoeunyane, Thaweni, Nomacala (a daughter) and Mpharane. It was on this site that they built a house. On reaching manhood, Matitta the prophet preached a special brand of the gospel travelling far and wide, in central and northern Lesotho and the eastern part of the then Orange Free State including the place called Qwaqwa.

Like any other human being, Matitta was married and had two daughters Marita and Maria. Through a dream and vision, Matitta is said to have seen his death approaching and his resting place. It was to be in the family 'ash heap' some twenty or so yards from his parental home and not in the public cemetery. It was common for the Basotho to bury their dead in the family yards more especially if the family home was situated in a rural area. Some witnesses attached

the significance to the prophet's choice of his resting place, namely the 'ash heap' to propound the theory that he intended by that gesture to proclaim that place as belonging to the church he had founded and some maintain that this was equally supported by an inscription on one of the stones of the monument in which he placed his two daughters in the 'trusteeship' of the church.

He was called to reside in Qwaqwa by Morena Ntsane. It was at this place where he prayed and healed people. A certain reverend invited him to his church. Due to Matitta's healing and praying powers, the church was always full. It was in this area where Matitta met Alice Mofutsanyane, mother to Thabo Mofutsanyane. Alice took Matitta to stay in her house; therefore, many people who were destined for healing came to the Mofutsanyane's place instead of going to the church. The reverend being jealous of Matitta sent the police for him to be arrested. He ran away and hid in Leribe, Qwaqwa. He later went to Natal and formed the Shembe group there.

In Qwaqwa he continued with his miracles. He met a certain Mr Little who owned the farm called Bluegumbush (the Basotho called it Letladi). Mr Little had no children and Matitta prayed for him. He later had two boys. During one of the dry seasons, Matitta prayed to God for a fountain (spring). That spring is there in Qwaqwa and was later known as Matitta's spring. He used the spring water to heal people.

After his death in 1935, the prophet's followers, then united, collected funds and built up his grave into a monument. When the monument was completed in 1935, the door's key was handed over to the prophet's wife Alice Lefela (also known as Mamarita). Later Mamarita and her daughters left for Lindley in the eastern Free State.



## 5. NKOE/SEFATE/POQONG IN VERKYKERSKOP (HARRISMITH)

### Introduction

In terms of the National Heritage Resources Act, (Act No. 25 of 1999), a provincial heritage resources authority (herewith referred to as the Free State Provincial Heritage Resources Authority) is responsible for the identification and management of Grade II heritage resources and heritage resources which are deemed to be a provincial competence in terms of this Act. According to the NHRA, (Act No. 25 of 1999): *“Those heritage resources of South Africa which are of cultural significance or other special value for the present community and for*

*future generations must be considered part of the national/provincial estate and fall within the sphere of operations of heritage resources authorities”.*

It is in view of the above stipulation that the Nkoe/Sefate/Poqong’s site in Verkykerskop in the Harrismith District be nominated for declaration as a Grade II site. The site depicts the history of Batlokoa of Manthatise.

### **Purpose**

To inform and recommend to the Free State Provincial Heritage Resources Authority (FSPHRA) the importance of declaring the Nkoe/Sefate/Poqong’s site as a Grade II site in terms of the stipulations of the NHRA (Act No. 25 of 1999). This is one of the remaining sites belonging to the Batlokoa in the Free State.

### **Locality of the site**

Nkoe/Sefate/Poqong is situated in Verkykerskop in the Harrismith District on route to the town of Memel. The area was occupied by Manthatise during the *Difaqane* era.

### **Background history of the Batlokoa**

In tracing the historical and cultural value of the site, the background of the Batlokoa cannot be ignored. It is believed that the Batlokoa originally emigrated south many centuries ago, probably from the Great Lakes of Africa. In their march southward they lived among the Bakgatla and other groups near the junction of the Crocodile (Mohaleankoe) and Marico (Madikwe) rivers. Long before the arrival of the Boer settlers and the British colonialists, the Batlokoa nation left Thaba-Mohale (Magaliesburg) in the present North West Province and crossed the Vaal River. After leaving Magaliesburg, the Batlokoa tribe split into two parties, one remaining in the north with Khoali as chief, the other wandering south under the chieftainship of Molatoli son of Molefe..

According to Ellenberger, little is known about Lepatsoe, who was then succeeded by his son Tsotetsi. A split occurred again during Tsotetsi’s reign. After the split, Motonosi journeyed southwards with the Makhlokoe of Tsotetsi and settled between the Eland River and the Drakensberg Mountain. Tsotetsi and Motonosi brought into existence the two distinct branches of the Batlokoa, namely, the senior branch being that of Tsotetsi known as the Bamakhalong-wa-Machocho; the junior branch being that of Motonosi, known as the Bamokotleng. The quarrels that existed between the Bamakhalong and the Bamokotleng branches led Motonosi with his Bamokotleng branch to settle permanently at their headquarters in Nkoe/Sefate/Poqong around Verkykerskop in the present-day Harrismith district and operated from there for well over 200 years.

### **The historical significance of the site**

Nkoe/Sefate/Poqong settlement area derives its importance from its association with the early ancestors of the Batlokoa tribe of Manthatise and Sekonyela who once lived there. It is believed that the Batlokoa settled in the Harrismith district in the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. To show

that different chiefs once settled at Nkoe/Sefate/Poqong village, a monument to commemorate and honour eight generations of the Batlokoa chiefs buried on the site, was laid by the late Chief Wessels Mota of the Batlokoa who resided in Qwaqwa. The eight chiefs included the following: Mohoeshe (1630); Makhalaka (1630-1670); Molefe (1650-1670); Sebeli (1670-1690); Makoro (1690-1715); Motonosi (1715-1735); Montoeli (1735-1755) and Mokotjo (1755-1755). Dates can clearly be seen on the monument but are considered as only approximate, the reason being that the Batlokoa worked by lunar year, and the other reason being the problem that dates were handed down from generation to generation through the word of mouth.

In 1813, Manthatise's husband Mokotjo passed away and he was also buried with other chiefs at the Nkoe/Sefate/Poqong site. Mokotjo's eldest son, Sekonyela, was to take the chieftainship after the death of his father but Sekonyela was too young to rein, therefore, his mother Manthatise acted on his behalf as the ruler of the Batlokoa. It is from this site where Manthatise as a young energetic woman was faced with a difficult task of ruling elderly men from the Batlokoa's. The Batlokoa was the first victim of the Nguni invasions across the Drakensberg. It is at the Nkoe/Sefate/Poqong site where Batlokoa of Manthatise took the brunt of the attack by the AmaNkwane and the AmaHlubi in 1822. Manthatise was attacked at the site by Chief Zwide of the AmaHlubi tribe because she had given refuge to Motsholi who had quarrelled with Chief Zwide. Later misunderstandings existed between Motsholi and Manthatise that led to the assassination of Motsholi. Motsholi's assassination led Manthatise to be attacked by Chief Mpangazitha. This attack came as a surprise to Manthatise. During the attack by Chief Mpangazitha, the Nkoe/Sefate/Poqong site became a battlefield until the Batlokoa were driven away from their headquarters at the Nkoe/Sefate/Poqong site. While Mpangazitha was attacking Manthatise, Matiwane was hot on his heels. The attacks of Mpangazitha, Manthatise and Matiwane created a fashion of inter-tribal warfare that was to become unique in the history of the Basotho people. Due to these attacks at the Nkoe/Sefate/Poqong site, the huts and kraals were destroyed. Today only the remnants are visible. After being attacked, Manthatise and her son Sekonyela continued to attack other smaller tribes. While ousted from Nkoe/Sefate/Poqong, the Batlokoa moved to Kuruman in the present North West Province, Namibia between Fish and Nasob Rivers, and across the Vaal River near Hoopstad, down to Masite in Southern Lesotho, to Tsikoane in the Leribe District, then across the Mohokare (Caledon) River in search of pastures and hunting grounds. On their way to Joalaboholo, they settled also at Bocheletsane next to Bethlehem where Prince Mota, the younger brother to Sekonyela was initiated.

Therefore, in view of the above information, the site is a tangible trace from the previous centuries. They stand as a symbol and proof of a people who once lived there. This can be deduced from the remains of the stone-walls and middens on the site. The ruins themselves play an important role in the writing of tribal history because they serve as evidence of the historical habitation of Sotho-speaking peoples at this site. The site depicts a way of life for the indigenous Sesotho-speaking people who are a distinct element of our diverse South African society.

## Recommendations

This dossier shows that Nkoe/Sefate/Poqong site is not just a piece of land but a site of heritage significance and with cultural values. It has been described as a site to which oral tradition is attached because of the events that took place there. Section 3: Sub-section 2(b) of the NHRA states: “places to which oral traditions are attached or which are associated with living heritage are of cultural significance for the present community and for the future generation, must be considered part of national estate”.

It is therefore against the above background information that it is recommended that the Nkoe/Sefate/Poqong site be declared as one of the provincial heritage sites in the Free State.



